

**Talbot County Tourism Board**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, June 12, 2018**  
**8:00 a.m.**  
**215 Bay Street, Conference Room #1, Easton, MD 21601**

**I. Call to Order**

Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

**Board Members Present:** Judy Bixler, Angela Eade, Ian Fleming, Kelley Cox, Dolores Jones, Harold Klinger, Jeff Schneider, Al Silverstein, Cassandra Vanhooser

**Board Members Absent:** John Booth, Tracey Johns, Laura Price, Ben Simons, Waitman Vanorsdale, Kim Weller

**Recording Secretary:** Candace Harris

**Visitors:** Sam Shoge, Ryan Snow

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the May meeting were presented. Dolores Jones moved that the minutes be accepted as written. Jeff Schneider seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**III. Old Business**

**Next Step 190:** Ms. Vanhooser distributed the Tourism sections of the Next Step 190 comparison table, noting that the complete document can be found online at NextStep190.com. She suggested that the Board review the document and comment on anything that concerns them.

Ms. Vanhooser highlighted the sections concerning tourism. She said that the Economic Development and Tourism team has advocated for stronger wording on farm-related businesses and agritourism. The “Accessory to Agriculture” and “Event Venue Accessory” on page 29 addresses those issues. Wylder Hotel has expressed concern because hotels in the county are not considered outdoor event venues. As it is proposed, an event venue must be an accessory to a current business, and the owner would need to go before the Board of Appeals to apply for a special exception.

Ms. Cox asked about the Langdon issue, referencing a planned inn at that site, and Ms. Vanhooser responded that that property is zoned Rural Conservation and an inn there can only have six rooms. Event venues are not allowed on properties zoned RC.

Mr. Schneider suggested doing some research of how other counties in the area view the situation, with Board members agreeing that we live up to the same standard as the other counties. Harold Klinger said that the Board needs to make a statement or recommendation to the County Council to advocate for hotels to be considered outdoor event venues and be able to host an unrestricted number of outdoor events with amplified music ending at 10 p.m. Mr. Schneider made a motion that the Board submit a letter, which was seconded by Mr. Fleming. The motion passed unanimously.

**Noise Ordinance:** The Noise Ordinance Task Force has not yet completed their work. However, the Code update states that outdoor events must submit an application for a special exception and file a noise compliance plan before they can have the outdoor event. Restaurants playing amplified music outdoors also must file a noise compliance plan. Ms. Eade asked Ms. Vanhooser if she could find out about fireworks at her next meeting.

**Short-Term Rentals:** The proposed requirements state that residents can only use their primary dwelling as an STR. A resident can't use an accessory dwelling. The Board had advocated that the definition of a short-term rental be expanded to include other more interesting properties and buildings. Mr. Schneider said that we should weigh in on it in support of the language. Ms. Eade noted that the updates that have been proposed seem to reflect the positions we have taken.

The Short-Term Rental Board has primarily been non-functional. There is a plan to increase the focus on compliance. Ms. Eade said she believes that the county should raise the room tax 1% and use that 1% for a compliance officer. Some Board members believe that paying for a compliance officer would require raising taxes and that didn't pass last time. Regardless, Ms. Eade believes someone needs to monitor the violations with short-term rentals. Ms. Vanhooser noted that Planning and Zoning is going to reactivate the review board and add a compliance officer for noise. We have advocated for at least one member of the Tourism industry to be on that board.

Another issue affecting the County is illegal rentals and the lost revenue resulting from unpaid taxes. Ms. Vanhooser recommended pursuing a VCA or Voluntary Collection Agreement with Airbnb, as a minimum. Mr. Fleming noted that Airbnb is good to work with and they have tax monitoring capabilities. Ms. Vanhooser suggested that sometime in the fall we get a work session on how to deal with the non-compliance issues.

Ms. Vanhooser also stated the County Council will likely not vote until August or September. She added that if the code update passes and it is not working to the benefit of the citizens, it can be amended. It may be difficult to amend, but it can be revisited. Angela also said that if we get our recommendation accepted and passed that it would be hard for the naysayers to oppose it. Ms. Vanhooser made a recommendation that the letter be signed by Judy Bixler so the recommendation will come from the Board and not the staff. She thinks it will be more powerful that way.

#### **IV. New Business**

**IPW:** Ms. Vanhooser reported that she went to Denver for the IPW Sales Meeting in partnership with the State of Maryland to pitch Talbot County as a destination for international travelers. It was very productive and she will be following up with all the people who she met and give them additional information. She noted that Washington, D.C. is the gateway, and the Capital Region USA partnership is selling the great Chesapeake Loop. An international traveler stays longer and spends more money.

**Plein Air Easton:** Ms. Vanhooser reported that we have a strong partnership with the Avalon Foundation through their Plein Air Easton Art Festival and competition. She has worked with Shannon Dill and the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service, as well as the agriculture community, for the past three years to better connect painters with farmers and to give the artists a better understanding of the local landscape. Now, a donor has come forward to donate \$30,000 to be spent over a three-year period to amass a collection of agriculture art. This collection will then become a travelling exhibit that will be presented at locations around the region. Ms. Vanhooser is part of the buying committee that will select the artwork at Plein Air this year.

**Fairfield Inn:** Waitman Vanorsdale asked Ms. Vanhooser to announce that he is hosting a celebration to celebrate their Diamond status at 11:30 a.m. today at the Fairfield Inn. Everyone is invited to attend.

#### **V. Town Reports**

Representatives from each of the towns reported on news and events taking place in their jurisdictions.

#### **IV. Next Board Meeting**

Ms. Vanhooser asked for input about the summer meeting schedule. Attendance is typically light in July and August. She suggested that the Board take a hiatus in those months. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 11, 2018. Mr. Schneider made the motion to change the meeting, and Ms. Cox seconded. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

#### **X. Adjournment**

Ms. Bixler thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Mr. Klinger motioned for adjournment. Mr. Schneider seconded. The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:03 a.m.

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